

The Roman Catholic Philosophical and Theological Understanding of Marriage and Celibacy

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Barker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "G" and "B".

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Abstract

The premise of this reflection flows from the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church's tradition has held for 2000 years that both the vocation to life-long marriage and the vocation to life-long celibacy are good in themselves. They also are both wonderful ways to live out one's life in response to an invitation from God.

Married love and celibate love have distinct focuses. In my first reflection on "The Foundation of Life-Long Marital Love," I use John Paul II's first book, *Love and Responsibility*, and its analysis of the metaphysical, psychological, and ethical nature of love within a marriage relationship. The second reflection is on "The Foundation of Life-Long Celibate Love." This reflection explores the history of celibacy, and the fundamental biblical call to celibacy "for the Kingdom" and "for the Lord."

The second half of this reflection looks at the lives of 12 people. Six of these people have felt and responded to the call to be married, and six of these people have felt and responded to the call to live single for God for life. Their stories are autobiographical in nature, and they give a glimpse of the personal nature of their individual calls to the married or celibate vocation.

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Introduction:

When my friends and family ask about my final semester at Ball State University, I usually end up telling them about my Honors Thesis. Naturally they ask what the subject of my thesis is going to be, and often I just give them some version of the title that I hope to use: The Roman Catholic Philosophical and Theological Understanding of Marriage and Celibacy. At that point, many of them say, "What do you mean marriage and celibacy? Aren't those two different things? You can't honestly think that the two of them go together in some way can you?" The focus of this thesis paper is in fact on the nature of marriage and celibacy. The basic assumption that I want to work from is that marriage and celibacy in themselves are both good, wonderful, and fulfilling ways to live out one's life. They also are complementary to each other in that when each is working well a greater fullness of God's Kingdom is present on earth. The Roman Catholic Church's understanding is that these two vocations are gifts received from God, and that we should be thankful for the specific grace needed to live out our vocation. When giving her teaching on the vocation to marriage or celibacy the Church presents a mix of philosophy, theology, psychology, practicalities, temptations, and benefits to expect. There really is no easy formula to find one's vocation, but the first place to begin is in prayer. Catholics specifically refer to this kind of prayer as discernment, discerning one's vocation, or basically trying to find God's will for your life.

Discernment may be the formal term, but in practice what does this term really mean? Discernment is a process through which you come to a conclusion on a specific

issue for which you want to find God's will and direction. Discernment is not only for that one time in your life when you are asking God if he wants you to be married or single for him. Discernment is a process that is beneficial to use with all kinds of major and minor decisions. A person may choose to spend more time discerning when there is a major decision to be decided, but choosing not to spend any time in this form of prayer for other more minor decisions, can often lead to not being in God's will.

Discerning prayer also is not waiting for God to audibly tell you exactly what to do. It also is not waiting for God to send you this huge sign that will make your choice perfectly clear. God can work this way, but overall he does not desire to encroach on our personal freedom. Discernment is coming to God, and asking him what he would have you do in a specific situation that you are open to advice on. Discernment involves the discerners' desire to do God's will and not one's own. True discernment involves saying yes to God's plan for you, before you even know what it is.

Discernment takes time, and it usually involves asking for help from a wiser and more mature Christian friend. Sometimes we are blinded by what we want, even if what God wants is really quite clear. Trusting this kind of spiritually mature person can help us to clearly see, in time, what God wants and is calling us to.

It has been my experience that in discernment God seems to have two objectives. He wants us to find his will for the specific question, decision, or advice we may be seeking. He also wants to make us wiser, purify our selfish desires, and give us a greater sense of his love through the process. Sometimes I think God is more interested in the latter rather than the former, but ultimately he does want us to know our part in his plan for saving the world by using us as individuals, and as a Christian community.

One specific area of discernment is praying through one's state in life, or in other words, seeking God's mind on whether or not he may be calling you to marriage for life or celibacy for life. The states of marriage and life-long celibacy are both filled with grace, both involve trials, and both, when lived in the right way, are a sign to the world of God's action and presence.

Many Catholics honestly choose not to spend a given amount of time considering what state in life God may want to call them to. Instead of spending a few weeks, months, or sometimes even a longer time in prayer with the Father, many choose to embrace their own will and plan for their lives. When a person does this she could in fact not find the plan God had intended. She also might have missed out on the grace to be received in allowing God to lead her to a solid confidence that she has found God's will. This special grace can help in the future when a person begins to question whether it really was God's will for them to be married or single. Many Catholics do in fact choose marriage without really considering celibacy. God works within that person's decision, even if his desire was to invite the person to the vocation of celibacy.

Coming to a decision on God's will for your state in life means looking at the question of, "How can I use the life God has given me for the greater glory of God and for his Kingdom?" The point of decision often comes when we get to the point where we can say, "Whatever God wants is what I want. If he calls me to be rich or poor, sick or healthy, despised or admired I am willing to embrace that. I am willing to embrace my Father's plan because of the deep consistent passionate love I have for his Son, his Holy Spirit, and for him." This point is referred to as indifference. Often it is when we get to this point of indifference that God clearly speaks to our heart and mind about what he

would have us do. He then often confirms our decision through the friend we have been seeking spiritual advice from, through specific scriptures, and through signs and ways that only the individual recognizes. It is important to recognize that it is the wish of the Roman Catholic Church that everyone who is able would go through this kind of process before deciding to remain single, or search for a spouse. Having God's mind on this most important decision can lead to peace of mind and heart in knowing that you chose and found God's will for your life.

The call to marriage and the call to being single for God's Kingdom require similar, but different, forms of love. The next two sections of this paper explore the difference of focus in a celibate person's love and a married person's love. Following these two sections are interviews with a number of diverse Catholic adults who are living out their vocations. I had the privilege of interviewing a man who is single for the Lord for life, a Priest, an Archbishop, and two women who are single for the Lord. I also interviewed an engaged couple and two married couples. Their stories show the depth and meaning behind discerning and finding one's vocation and then living this calling out to the fullest. Finally, I will conclude with some of my own personal thoughts and stories.

The Foundation of Life-Long Marital Love:

There is an interesting difference and motivation behind the kind of love that develops within a married versus a celibate person as a result of the choice they have made regarding the way they will live out their lives. The married person has chosen to have an intimate relationship for as long as he or she may live with one specific person. The celibate person has chosen to have friendships with many, but total personal intimacy with God alone. Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, who is better known as Pope John Paul II, wrote his first book called *Love and Responsibility*, while still living in Poland in 1960. Even though John Paul II's thoughts are over 40 years old, his words from this work bring a great deal of clarity to the nature of married or betrothed love. His second chapter in *Love and Responsibility* called "The Person and Love," details the metaphysical analysis of love, the psychological analysis of love, and the ethical analysis of love within the context of marriage. The focus of many of the following thoughts came from the chapter "The Person and Love." Due to the philosophical background that John Paul II was formed by in preparation for priesthood, his analysis is also the most philosophical part of this thesis paper. Later, I will look at the nature of celibate love.

A Metaphysical Analysis of Love:

In his metaphysical analysis of love, John Paul II refers to love as a "complex reality with many aspects to it" (73). The simplest definition of love between two people of the opposite sex is a "mutual relationship between two persons based on a particular attitude to the good, adopted by each of them individually and by both jointly" (73). Love itself is "the greatest of virtues, which one might say embraces all the others and

raises them all to its own level, imprinting its own distinctive features on them” (74). A husband and wife are called to embrace this kind of love within marriage.

His starting point for married love begins in the context of a relationship between persons that is exclusive but at the same time mutual. When love is not mutual between two people, it is no longer love, because it is satisfying one’s desires at the expense of another. Love in a relationship seeks a “good” to be embraced. What that good ends up being will look different for each individual couple. For Roman Catholics, the marriage relationship involves building a family, developing a deep friendship together, growing in the faith of the Church, and ultimately, building the Kingdom of God together. Love, according to John Paul II, is the virtue from which all other virtues are born and find their meaning. In a sense, he is saying that as a person grows in virtue, this growth should always equal a growth in one’s ability to love. Loving others consistently is the motivation behind the difficult change needed to become virtuous and holy. “Love is the fullest realization of the possibilities inherent in man” (82). This realization becomes reality as a person changes so as to be able to love more.

John Paul II takes these foundational insights and begins to describe the difference and interplay of attraction and sentiments. “Attraction is not just one of the elements of love, one of its components so to speak, but it is one of the essential aspects of love as a whole” (76-77). Mutual attraction is the starting point for marital love, or as John Paul II says, it is the “embryo” of love. Sentiments are the “inherent qualities and values” (78) that allow basic attraction to go deeper. These qualities: patience, faithfulness, honesty, and the ability to forgive and be forgiven are the bases for

friendship to grow and develop. Lack of these needed qualities hinders the chance of friendship evolving within marriage.

John Paul II also states that “man and woman alike are by nature corporeal and spiritual beings” (76). The spiritual reality is a reality that Catholics take seriously as they look at the source and nature of marital love. The source of marital love is the love that Christ has, and had, for his pure bride, the Church. The Church in the broadest sense includes all those made in the image and likeness of the Father, which includes each and every human being. Jesus’ love for the Church was so deep that he willingly died for his bride the Church. His love continues toward his bride in many ways. One particular sign and picture of this love is through observing the love that flows from an interpersonal, intimate, and committed relationship between a husband and wife.

Beauty is also an important concept in a metaphysical analysis of love. Beauty is so distorted currently that often it takes a real effort to understand the essence of beauty. Only purity of mind, heart, and soul, will allow us to experience more of the wonder and awe of true and pure beauty. John Paul II reflects that “It is necessary to discover and to be attracted by the inner as well as the outer beauty, and perhaps indeed to be more attracted by the former than by the latter” (80). Inner beauty is much more lasting, while outer beauty will fade away in time. We have a great deal of control over our inner beauty, but we have a limited amount of control over our outer beauty. Our inner beauty is the one true gift we have to offer God, and it is the one true gift we have to offer in marriage. The presence of outer beauty is a wonderful good in itself, while inner beauty continues to grow and develop over a lifetime. Both inner and outer beauty need to be appreciated and valued in a marriage relationship.

At this point, John Paul II makes a key distinction in the difference between true marital love and the love of another person as an object to be used.

Goodwill is the same as selflessness in love: not ‘I long for you as a good’ but ‘I long for your good, I long for that which is good for you.’ Love as goodwill, *amor benevolentiae*, is therefore love in a more unconditional sense than love as desire. It is the purest form of love (83).

Love as goodwill is the basis of day-to-day life in marriage both for the couple and for their children. When self-less love for another’s good is lost, then the marriage in time itself will also dissolve. This kind of unconditional love is a result of a grace-filled relationship with the Trinity. Without this kind of grace, *amor benevolentia* is just something to talk about instead of an act of love to practice consistently.

Reciprocity was one of the new words I enjoyed reflecting on from *Love and Responsibility*. “Reciprocity is the proof that love has matured, that it has become something ‘between’ persons, has created a community of feeling, and that its full nature has thereby been realized” (85). Reciprocity is the give and take that happens between husband and wife. The fullness of the reciprocity of love is being able to say, “I want to personally serve you for the rest of my life,” while knowing that the person you want to serve has an equal desire to serve you in the same way. Instead of accepting a superficial love with no meaning behind it, reciprocity in marriage is centered around basic day-to-day actions like cleaning, cooking, painting, car pooling, child raising, working in the world, taking out the trash, washing dishes, and changing diapers. We can theorize on what love is, but it is easy to understand what love is when we joyfully do these kinds of day-to-day things for another person because of our love for them. John Paul II then makes a profound statement of truth. “The structure of LOVE is that of an interpersonal

communion” (88). This kind of communion takes place when reciprocity between two people is an active reality.

The final part of a metaphysical analysis of the nature of love is looking at betrothed love. John Paul II describes betrothed love in 12 words, “The essence of betrothed love is self-giving, the surrendering of one’s ‘I’” (96). Betrothed love results in two people giving themselves to each other. This kind of giving of oneself is very foreign to much of American culture. Instead, as Americans we want to receive pleasure from another person rather than sacrifice our own pleasure in response to a fundamental human need to love another person deeply and selflessly. This self-giving is then further explained by John Paul II. “In this sense, one person can give himself or herself, can surrender entirely to another, whether to a human person or to God, and such a giving of self creates a special form of love which we define as betrothed love” (97). John Paul II uses the analogy that just as a doctor gives himself to a patient, a mother gives herself to a child, a teacher gives to a student, and a priest gives to a lost soul, “what happens in a marital relationship is that the man simultaneously gives himself, in return for the woman’s gift of herself to him” (99). This is the essence of mutual self-giving and this is the essence of marital love. From this essence a multiplicity of thoughts, actions, feelings, and divine graces flow between the two people.

A Psychological Analysis of Love:

John Paul II also offers a psychological analysis of love in the book *Love and Responsibility*. His main focus begins with the concepts of sensuality and sentiment. Sensuality is an experience that comes from a sense expression and an emotion. “A sense impression is a reaction to content, an emotion is a reaction to value” (103). In relation to

sensuality, the content is what you visualize and the value is connected to the body of the other person. “Sensuality and sexual value are connected above all with the body of a person of another sex” (105). This experience of admiration for the body in itself is not wrong, but it can quickly become wrong when the focus is narrowed in on the sexual gain to be had, and when the body is used for exploitation. “Sensuality expresses itself mainly in an appetite form when a person of the opposite sex is seen as an ‘object of desire’ specifically because of the sexual value inherent in the body itself” (107). This appetite is part of the marriage relationship, and often it has an affect on the psyche of the man more than the woman.

To make things clearer, John Paul II states that:

Sensuality by itself is not love...sensuality in itself is quite blind to the person, and oriented only to the sexual value connected with the ‘body’. For this reason it is characteristically fickle, turning wherever it finds that value wherever a ‘possible object of enjoyment’ appears (108).

Imagination and memory can be influenced by sensuality, because the external and inner senses are connected to one’s experience of sensuality. Sexual fascinations and fantasies that degrade and demean the person’s outer and inner beauty are part of the negative aspect of taking sensuality too far.

Again though, sensuality is not inherently wrong; rather, it is just something two married people have to be very careful and aware of so that it does not lead to the devaluation of the other person. Spouses are not solely objects to be desired. Rather, they are fundamentally persons to love through service. Sensuality can be an aid in making this love easier to embrace wholeheartedly. “All this most certainly does not show that sensual excitability, as a natural and congenital characteristic of a concrete person, is in itself morally wrong” (109). Natural sensuality or the gift of experiencing

beauty intensely and visually without degrading another person can be both an aid and a helpful aid and at the same time a danger for married love to be cultivated.

In contrast to sensuality, sentiment is based on a relationship or friendship between persons. Sentiment is different in that “the content of the sense expression is the whole ‘person of the other sex,’ the whole ‘man’ or ‘woman’” (110). In this sense, the sexual value is tied to the person and not just the body. As a result of healthy sentiment, affection, rather than pure pleasure or emotion, becomes the outward appearance of the inward presence of sentiment. This passage from *Love and Responsibility* focuses on that reality:

Affection appears to be free from that concupiscence of which sensuality is full. In such an emotional state, though, a different sort of desire is discernible and a different need makes itself felt. This is the desire for nearness, for proximity, and simultaneously for exclusivity or intimacy, a longing to be always alone together. Sentimental love keeps two people close together, binds them – even if they are physically far apart – to move in each other’s orbit. This love embraces memory and imagination, and also communicates itself to the will (110-111).

Intimacy is based on complete trust of another person. Intimacy is found in sharing your deepest thoughts, desires, struggles, dreams, and experiences with the confidence that the other person will build you up instead of tearing you down. Intimacy in the end is the fruit of a good friendship.

In a similar way to men having more of an experience of sensuality than women do, women are more drawn to the sentimental part of the relationship, which is built on consistent communication, talking, and discussion between the two spouses. “It is pretty recognized that woman is ‘by nature’ more sentimental and man is more sensual” (111). Sensuality in itself is not love because a large part of the focus is on the body or physical attraction between the two people. Likewise, sentiment in itself is also not love in the

marital sense because sentiment alone is similar to the affection between a brother and sister, or two cousins. In this case of family relationships, the sentiment is important and good. Sexual attraction to another person is a much different kind of sentiment than the attraction found between siblings. Thus, sentiment and sensuality are key components of marital love.

John Paul II's psychological analysis of love also looks at issues such as truth, freedom, self-determination, and integration. Within the inner life and the inner self of a human being there is a need for integration, and specifically an integration of all the elements involved in one's ability to love another person. In marriage, this integration's focus is on one person, namely, one's spouse. Psychology, or the science of the soul, "confirms that the most significant characteristics of the inner life are the sense of truth and the sense of freedom" (114-115). These two characteristics are deeply interrelated. Without a sense of truth, how can a man choose what is good, right, and pure? If a man does not understand the workings of the sin of lust in his life, then how can he reject the lustful traps and temptations that life daily brings? If a woman does not understand the truth of self-giving love, then how can she realize that her tendency to be selfish is hurting her marriage partner?

John Paul II makes clear the interdependence of truth and freedom. "His ability to discern the truth gives man the possibility of self-determination, or of deciding for himself the character and direction of his own actions, and that is what freedom means" (115). As the inner life forms, one's sense of truth develops and true freedom to embrace the good takes place. This reality is a result of the integration that is occurring within an

individual's capacity to love fully as a married man or woman. John Paul II describes this as the process of making oneself whole or complete.

The Latin word 'integer' means 'whole' – so that 'integration' means 'making whole', the endeavor to achieve wholeness and completeness. The process of integrating love relies on the primary elements of the human spirit – freedom and truth (116).

The call to express marital love is found in choosing to use your freedom to give to another person, while knowing fully that this freedom to embrace self-giving is taking place at the same time in your spouse in relation to you. This is the true reality of marital love and its origin is found in the depths of God's love for us.

An Ethical Analysis of Love:

The last aspect of love John Paul II reflects on in *Love and Responsibility* is the ethical analysis of love. The ethical analysis of love begins by looking at the value and dignity of each individual person. In the case of love between a man and a woman, there is a tendency to place this value primarily on one's physical attraction to that person. John Paul II sees a real danger in this approach when he says that, "Every person of the opposite sex possesses value in the first place as a person, and only secondarily possesses a sexual value" (122). Thus, love is focused on the person and not solely on the other's sexual appeal to your senses. The attraction between a man and a woman is both natural and good, yet it reaches deeper and becomes love only when it honors and respects the other person. "The fundamental ethical characteristic of love is its affirmation of the person or else it is not love at all" (123). It is not love because it is not based on the reality of the beauty of the whole person. This beauty is found in the totality of the other's personality, mind, heart, and soul, and yes, beauty is also found within the other person's God-given body. This basic temptation to disrespect another person is why

pornography in all forms is so wrong. When we are detached from someone's personality, mind, heart, and soul, and only focus on the body, we quickly become more like animals and less like human beings created in the image and likeness of God. This image and likeness ultimately is found within the personality, mind, heart, soul, and body of Jesus Christ. Respecting the person is not only a necessary value, but a non-negotiable quality located within the depth of one's love.

John Paul II then looks at the reality created by the union of two people who are committed for life to one another and one another only. Marital union reaches its summit in the act of making love or having sexual intercourse. This intimate, spiritual, and physical union is the summit, because it involves a complete gift of self to another, without fear, hesitation, or doubt. This surrender is not only on the part of the woman for the man's enjoyment, and John Paul II makes this point crystal clear. "Contrary to the superficial view of sex, according to which love (meaning here erotic love) culminates in a woman's surrender of her body to a man, we should rightly speak of the mutual surrender of both persons" (126). Without the mutual surrender of both persons, sexual intercourse is no longer a good to be shared. "Take away the fullness of self-surrender, the completeness of personal commitment, and what remains will be a total denial and negation of it" (129). This total denial and negation is in effect rape or abuse, and it involves one person selfishly using another.

In contrast to this selfishness, when the full surrender is mutual, this leads to betrothed love. Within this love takes place a mystery. "The 'mystery' of reciprocity: acceptance must also be giving, and giving receiving. Love is of its nature reciprocal: he who knows how to receive knows also how to give" (129). Because love's nature is

reciprocal, when sexual intercourse is resulting in self-giving LOVE the inner depths of both people are being awakened to a realization. "I fully value you as a person who I want to love intimately, and I believe and know that you too fully value me as a person you want to love intimately." The inner and outer reality that occurs when a couple makes LOVE gives us an example of the true nature of marital love.

John Paul II begins to close this reflection with an important caution and a picture of the objective fullness of good. The caution he gives is centered on the likelihood of a difficult test within a marriage. Although sexual fulfillment is part of the desire for a marriage partner, over time the personal friendship is what will allow the marriage to survive in the challenges that are sure to come. When cancer, death, poverty, sickness, and depression have to be faced, the depth of a couple's friendship, faithfulness to each other, and their faith in God will be put to the test. This kind of test could theoretically happen at any point in the marriage, and it will probably happen more than once. John Paul II reflects on this important part of the lifetime aspect of marriage:

Marriage is put to the test most severely when the sensual and emotional reactions themselves grow weaker, and sexual values as such lose their effect. Nothing then remains except the value of that person, and the inner truth about the love of those concerned comes to light. If their love is a true gift of self, so that they belong each to the other, it will not only survive but also grow stronger, and sink deeper roots. Whereas if it was never more than a sort of synchronization of sensual and emotional experiences it will lose its *raison d'être* and the person involved in it will suddenly find themselves in a vacuum. We must never forget that only when love between human beings is put to the test can its true value be seen (134).

This test could happen at any time in marriage and over the years it often happens multiple times.

Finally, and most importantly, when a marriage is in Christ, blessed by God, and filled with the Holy Spirit, divine love is truly present. The love present within the

relationships of persons in the Trinity defines a Catholic marriage. Trinitarian based love is part of the essence of a Catholic Christian marriage. The kind of love I am referring to is what John Paul II calls “desiring God for that person” (138). “To desire ‘unlimited’ good for another person is really to desire God for that person. He alone is the objective fullness of the good” (138). Divine love recognizes that only God can fill the void in our hearts that desires to have a relationship with our Father, Creator, Savior, and Friend. We as humans can not fulfill this innate void in our hearts for ourselves or for each other without being in relationship with God. This void within our being that wants to experience divine love can only be fulfilled by the love of the Trinity of persons. Thus, relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit fills us with divine love from which we can love our spouse, our children, our families, our friends, and all the other people that God brings into our lives. As divine love increases in us, our ability to enter into the marriage relationship as a self-giving, free, truth-filled, and integrated person is realized.

When I sat down to read *Love and Responsibility*, I quickly realized that John Paul II chose not to give many real life examples for his metaphysical, psychological, and ethical analysis of marital love. Instead, I believe he chose to put forth a framework from which married people could gain an understanding of the fullness, complexity, and divine nature of love. It is almost as if he thought that once the framework was in place, the examples in a sense would take care of themselves. It is my hope and prayer that the reciprocal effect of **betrothed and Trinitarian love** may come true in marriages throughout our Father’s Kingdom.

The Foundation of Life-Long Celibate Love:

What is celibate love and what does it have to do with celibacy? Celibate love is the love found within a person who is committed to remain a virgin and to live single for God for life. This kind of person believes in the beauty and dignity of chastity and virginity. Those called to celibacy also believe in the value of the vocation to marriage. Celibates freely choose to give up the goodness of marriage in order to live out an invitation from God to live their lives solely and undividedly for him. Celibate love by its very nature is focused in a different way than married love is focused. Celibate love is focused on loving God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and on loving all kinds of people God brings into your life.

Married love is focused on loving God, loving your spouse, loving your children, and then loving others. There is a dual love going on in marriage towards God and your spouse, but primarily the call in marriage is to love your spouse and devote much of your time and energy to him or her and your children. For the celibate person, intimacy is found directly from their relationship with the Trinity. They have no significant other person to share deeply with on a daily basis, so for celibacy to work for them, they must learn to share consistently on a daily basis in an intimate and personal way with God. This statement can make it sound as if celibates do not experience intimate relationships. On the contrary, celibates do have an important level of intimacy within their friendships with others, but the highest level of intimacy they experience is one-on-one with Jesus Christ as they build a prayerful, Holy Spirit-filled, and communicating love with God their Father.

It is helpful to consider celibate love and the vocation to celibacy within the context of history, and within the context of individuals whom God used to change the world positively through the living out of their vocation. Celibate love in the New Testament Christian tradition began with the lives of John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus' mother Mary, and Jesus' foster-father Joseph. As a prophet and as the one to prepare the way for Jesus, John the Baptist found it necessary to fast, pray, and preach a baptism of repentance as a single man. His specific call to these three holy actions also involved the call to be singly devoted to God as a celibate man. All Christian traditions hold that John and Jesus were celibate (i.e. they were single for God for life), but the Roman Catholic tradition has always believed in a special way that Mary and Joseph remained virgins even after they were married. It is also significant that the Holy Spirit used Mary's virginity directly and Joseph's virginity indirectly to produce the gift of God's own son, Jesus, for the world. Celibates strive to continue in working with the Holy Spirit to give the gift of a relationship with God's son Jesus to the world.

Saint Paul the Apostle testifies in 1 Corinthians 7:7 that he too lived a celibate life. "Indeed, I wish everyone to be as I am, but each has a particular gift from God, one of one kind and one of another." Paul's "particular gift from God" was a perpetual life of virginity that bore fruit for God's Kingdom throughout the world. Saint John the Gospel writer also lived as a single man. John and three courageous women were the only ones to remain faithfully at Jesus' side on Mount Calvary.

By the 4th century, celibacy became more formal through the life of Saint Anthony and his monasticism in the deserts of Egypt (251-356 AD). Saint Basil (330-379 AD) began to organize these desert monks into communities of celibate men. Basil

wrote a monastic rule that still survives today. Saint Benedict would soon follow in the 6th century (480-547 AD) with his famous *Rule of Saint Benedict*. This rule of life helped establish the Benedictine order, which was first formal international religious order of Brothers and Priests. By this time, the traditional night prayer was being chanted within the Benedictine order. The psalms used by the Benedictine Monks over 1400 years ago are still the same psalms (Psalm 4 and Psalm 91) the Church regularly uses in night prayer today.

In the 13th century, Saint Francis (1182-1226 AD) formed an order to serve the poor, and Saint Dominic (1170-1221 AD) formed an order that had a focus on the poor as well as providing Catholic education. In the 15th century, Saint Ignatius (1491-1556AD) formed an order to provide more solid Catholic education and renewal to the Church. While forming the Dominican order, Dominic became a priest, and in forming the Society of Jesus or the Jesuit order, Ignatius later in life became a priest. Francis remained a brother and never became a priest as he formed the Franciscan order.

In the 16th century, Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) helped to reform the Carmelite order of cloistered Nuns. These Nuns' sole vocation was to a life of dedicated personal and intercessory prayer. Teresa's writings on prayer have helped literally tens of thousands of people learn to communicate with God better and more effectively. Others such as Saint Elizabeth Anne Seton (1774-1821) in the early 19th century, and Mother Teresa (1910 – 1997) in the 20th century, continued this movement of celibate women's communities. Elizabeth Anne Seton's nuns, the Sisters of Charity, began the first parochial Catholic schools in the United States, and Mother Teresa's nuns, the Missionaries of Charity, serve and care for the poorest of the poor throughout the world.

All of these movements had a focus on community life, prayer, evangelism, and service. Thousands of other orders of Brothers, Priests, Monastics, Nuns, and single men or single women have formed over the centuries. As the world's needs change and increase, many more celibate Roman Catholic religious orders are sure to be started.

The Roman Catholic Priesthood also focuses on prayer, evangelism, and service. Catholic Priests are also directly responsible for the administration of the five sacraments of baptism, confession, Eucharist, matrimony, and last rites. Holy orders, or the ordaining of men to the priesthood and confirmation, are the responsibility of those called from the priesthood to become Bishops, Archbishops, or Cardinals. Community living is primarily found within religious order priests, rather than diocesan priests. Religious order priests also have more freedom to move to other states or countries, while diocesan priests are committed to one local diocese unless they become a Bishop or receive a rare calling elsewhere. Communities of Nuns, communities of women living single for the Lord, religious order Brothers, and communities of men living single for the Lord have also contributed significantly to religious communities and religious life in the Church.

The call to celibacy and the call to celibate love of God and neighbor can be located and found directly in the Holy Bible. There are many key texts that have had an influence in helping the Holy Spirit to call men and women to a celibate vocation and in allowing individuals to then understand the fullness of meaning behind that call. These texts have also helped people to know how to successfully and fruitfully live out a calling to virginity for the Kingdom. I am going to reflect on a number of these texts, which will help us begin to understand the nature of a committed celibate's calling and the focus of their love.

Despite all the negative feedback lately on celibacy, Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap, in his book *Virginity: A Positive Approach to Celibacy for the Sake of the Kingdom of Heaven*, offers a very encouraging perspective on this way of life. He writes that fundamentally “celibacy was instituted by Jesus” (xii). This can be said, because Jesus chose not to marry in response to a call from God. Thus, he lived a celibate life. Based on this fact alone, there can be no question that celibacy is a legitimate, valid, and fruitful way to live out one’s life. Jesus’ life has affected literally the entire world positively. The principles espoused by Christianity, which he founded, have helped shape just principles, laws, applications, theories, ethics, and philosophies. Without even focusing on his tremendous spiritual impact, one can look at the life of Jesus and see that it has had a direct effect in helping form many of the ideas, rights, and freedoms we as an American Christian nation hold to be true for all humankind.

Raniero Cantalamessa points out that in chapter 19 of Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus directly proposes for the first time the value of living as a “eunuch.” Even though, this was an unusual term to use. It would not be far fetched to think that Jesus himself had been accused of being a eunuch (i.e. castrated man), because he too was unmarried.

Matthew 19:10-12, conveys Jesus’ stance:

His disciples said to Him: ‘If that’s how things are between husband and wife, it’s better not to marry.’ But He replied: ‘Not everyone can accept what I have said, but only those to whom it’s granted. For there are some who are eunuchs from their mother’s womb, and some who were made so by other men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone accept this who can. (Matt 19:10-12)

In the Jewish mindset, according to Rabbi Eleazar as quoted in *Virginity*, “a man with no wife is not even a man” (4). Jesus must have known this commonly held belief, but he

still was willing to propose this new and unique way to live out one's life "for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven."

Another foundational passage on celibacy that Cantalamessa mentions in *Virginity* is in Saint Paul the Apostle's First Letter to the Corinthian Church. Paul's insights compliment Jesus' statements in Matthew 19.

This world as we know it is passing away! I want you to be free from anxiety. The unmarried man concerns himself with the Lord's affairs, with how to please the Lord, while the married man concerns himself with worldly affairs – how to please his wife – and he is divided. Likewise, girls who are betrothed and unmarried women who are concerned with the Lord's affairs – how to be holy in body and spirit – while a married woman is concerned with affairs of the world, such as how to please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not simply to rein you in – I want to preserve good order so you'll be able to devote yourselves to the Lord without distractions (1 Cor 7:31-35).

As stated earlier, Paul himself was living in such an undivided way. He was unmarried and concerned solely with the "Lord's affairs," and how to please God. He was devoted to "the Lord without distractions," and this allowed him to travel throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His travels involved many persecutions, imprisonments, and hardships. Theoretically, he could have done this as married man, but sacrificing himself in this way, while having a family, would be irresponsible, and could even be considered against God's will for a man with a wife and children to care for and protect. Paul's proposal then is that focusing one's life on the "Lord's affairs" is of equal importance to focusing one's life on your "spouse's affairs." The two are not mutually exclusive, because you can be focused on your spouse while being focused on the Lord. At the same time, there is a distinct advantage to being able to exclusively spend time building the Kingdom of God for the one who decides to live solely and undividedly for God as a single person.

In describing the first scripture from Matthew 19, Cantalamessa distinguishes that the motivation for celibacy is “for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven,” while in the Corinthian passage the motivation is “for the sake of the Lord.” Both motivations are good. “The first is for the sake of a cause, while the second is for the sake of a person” (21). Both aspects “for others” and “for God,” help celibates to find meaning, purpose, and a personal relationship with God as they live out their unique calling to celibate love.

If a celibate only lives for God, then there is a tendency to become self-focused and self-centered. On the other hand, if a celibate lives only for others, then the problems of burnout and frustrations become issues. Celibates receive energy and strength from their one-on-one relationship with God, but this grace is then to be used to help, serve, and love others unconditionally. Balance between the two, living for God and living for others, keeps the fire of a love within a celibate’s heart alive and burning.

Jesus makes a similar statement in all three Gospels when he states that “anyone who wants to come after Me, must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow in My footsteps” (Mt 16:24; Mk 8:34, 10:21; Lk 10:21). Jesus’ thoughts are echoed in his direct response to the rich young man and through his encouraging answer to Peter’s following question. Both of these passages are found in chapter 18 of Luke’s Gospel. First is Jesus’ response to the rich young man: “There is still one thing left for you: sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Lk 18:22). This offer Jesus proposes meant leaving everything. Jesus’ next statement to Peter’s question shows that this offer included giving up one’s potential and even actual home, wife, children, family, and friends. Like many of us naturally would, the rich young man declines the offer, but Peter and the other disciples

had accepted a similar offer three years earlier. When the rich young man left, Peter, on behalf of the other disciples, asked Jesus what kind of reward could they expect for the sacrifice they had given. This passage is not only in Luke's Gospel. Similar passages are found in Mark's and Matthew's Gospel also.

Then Peter said, 'We have given up our possessions and followed you.' He said to them, 'Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God who will not receive back an overabundant return in this present age and eternal life in the age to come' (Lk 18:28-30; Mt 19:27-30; Mk 10:28-30).

There is strong evidence that the disciples themselves, at least for their three years with Jesus, had given up wives, children, parents, and friends to follow Jesus. Jesus too, had done the very same thing. The reward that they were to receive in one sense is really not the point of this passage. The critical point is that the Kingdom of God is worth giving up everything for! This life is temporal and finite, and the life to come is eternal and infinite. One who chooses to offer himself or herself for the Father and for the Father's Kingdom is making a choice that makes sense for oneself and for others whom they will help to have a relationship with Jesus.

This kind of outlook involves having an eternal perspective on life. The depth of our love as human beings is expressed in the depth of personal sacrifice we can offer to another person as a result of that burning love within us for them. The depth of celibate love says to Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit, "I love you so much that I am willing to sacrifice my whole life for love of your people, for your Kingdom, and to be in intimate personal relationship with you." Committed life-long celibate love, just like committed life-long married love, is an awesome and profound mystery of God's grace in one's life,

mind, and heart. May this grace be ever present in people's lives throughout the Kingdom of God on earth!

Autobiographical Sketches:

The actual living out of married and celibate love is what this paper is really all about. Good Catholic Christian philosophy and theology should lead to a life of self-giving to others. This kind of life is filled with day-to-day practicalities, sacrificial actions, many challenges, abundant graces, personal benefits, unique relationships, selfless sacrifices, and ultimately self-giving love. The following are some autobiographical glimpses into the lives of three celibate men, two celibate women, one engaged couple, and two married couples. The celibates were given a set of questions on celibacy from which they gave written responses. One of the married couples responded in writing in a similar way to different questions focused on marriage. The other two couples were interviewed face-to-face. I am going to fill in a few gaps to their histories, but basically their words speak for themselves.

Autobiographical Sketches of five Committed Celibates:

David Beskar

David Beskar is 36 years old. Dave started college at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, and then finished with a Bachelor of Science in Economics at the University of Minnesota's Twin Cities campus. Dave joined the Brotherhood of the People of Praise during August of 1989 and made a full commitment in 1997. The Brotherhood is a Roman Catholic religious order with direct ties to the People of Praise ecumenical (i.e. inter-denominational), charismatic, covenanted, Christian community. Dave has five sisters and one brother. Here is his description of his work experiences. "I grew up on a dairy farm in western Wisconsin. Usually I had chores such as milking animals, feeding animals, animal health care, field work, and fixing machinery. In college, I had several odd jobs to make money. By junior year, I wrote computer programs for an engineering company. In the fall of 1991, I started teaching at Trinity high school in Minneapolis, Minnesota."

Dave's initial calling to celibate life happened in college. "During college I was contacted by Joel Kibler to visit South Bend and learn about the Brotherhood. After several months of discernment, I decided to live in the Brotherhood for a year, to gain as much understanding as I could about the life of the Brotherhood."

“During my first year at the brotherhood, I prayed and discerned that God would be pleased if I choose to live single for Him. I was a bit fearful, but at the same time, I knew that living in the Brotherhood was not a permanent decision for the first few years. But as confirmation, the next couple years of my life were grace filled, and this demonstrated that the Lord had given me the gift to live the life of the Brotherhood.”

Dave describes his personal call and thoughts on living celibacy for God. “I believe God has made me a man who can live the celibate life. I'm certain that God is calling men to be free to serve Him with all of their time and energy. I'm free to aid brothers and sisters in many ways. My life is a life of prayer and service.”

As far as who encouraged him in this vocation, Dave responded, “I felt encouraged by my parents, Gil Rynda (a single man in the Twin Cities branch of the People of Praise), Joel Kibler, and the other brothers in the Brotherhood. Overall, I experienced support from spiritual headship, and men in my earlier men's groups.”

Prayer is key in Dave's life. “Prayer has matured and changed over the years. Prayer is essential to making sense of life and the situations I encounter. Since I am living single for the Lord, I find a deep personal friendship with God as being a highlight of my life. I suppose since I don't have the deep friendship of a wife, the Lord has become my best friend. Prayer has matured in that it is a time of thanks and sharing with God. I think hard about scripture, and see many new things about the Lord. I find prayer to be joyful and full of grace. Prayer is full of faith and confidence that God is listening and participating in the daily events of my life.

“The hardest thing about being celibate is that people may not understand the depth and joy of the life. I find it disappointing that many people don't understand how God can be their closest and finest friend. This is the only way to make sense of being a celibate man.

“The most rewarding part of this life, is working hard, knowing the Father, having great men as friends in the Brotherhood, teaching everyday, watching children grow up into adults, joining in family life, and going to bed tired.”

Reverend Brian M. Doerr

Reverend Brian M. Doerr is a Roman Catholic Priest. He currently is serving as vocations director for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lafayette, Indiana. Father Brian Doerr is 37 years old, and he received a Bachelor degree from Purdue, and a Master's of Divinity degree from the Josephinum seminary in Columbus, Ohio. Father Brian became a Deacon in 1997, and a Priest in 1998. Father Brian has two sisters and three brothers. Before entering the seminary, he was a staff member of Senator Richard G. Lugar's Washington Office. He also was a Legislative Assistant for the House Republican Caucus in Indianapolis.

Father Brian describes his early and eventual definite calling to the celibate priesthood in these words; “I knew God was calling me to the priesthood when I was seven years old. I suppose I understood that the priest was celibate, but the call to the priesthood and the magnitude of the vocation outweighed the “sacrifice” of celibacy. Even as an adult, for me, my focus on the work of the priest heavily outweighed any anxiety about celibacy.

“Determined. A soldier does not go to war with his wife and children in tow. I truly see celibacy as a release from any burden, however sweet, which would prevent me from being completely at the disposal of Holy Mother Church.

“I sincerely believe God called me to be celibate because he has something greater that he wishes to bestow upon me – the life of a celibate for the Kingdom, if lived properly, it is nothing short of an adventure. Undeserving as I am, I believe celibacy is the doorway to greater mysteries that most people today have no intention of, nor capability of, entering.

“I believe, reflecting on my childhood, my old Irish/German pastor, Father Thomas O. Heilman, was instrumental in my vocation. He was a tough man, strict and businesslike... yet he had an unyielding faith. I believe he saw himself as a man sent by God to pastor his people. He did so with strength, courage, and a sense of focus. Ironically, he was also, as I have come to find out, very hard on people... almost, some would say, cruel. I never saw this side of the man. I do not think this was a reflection on his own spirituality or his call to celibacy, as much as it was his upbringing – the period of time in which he grew up. Nonetheless, he was like Mount Zion to me... never to be shaken.

“Early on, my Spiritual Father told me that in my “loneliness,” whether real or perceived was a call to prayer – a call to a deeper union with God. In addition to meditation or formal prayer, I believe my mind constantly considers the presence of God, and I am constantly attempting to conform my will to his. In the more “quite” moments, which are rare for a priest these days, I believe we dwell together in work and in prayer.

“The hardest thing about celibacy is the current condition of the culture. St. Thomas Aquinas taught: ‘There is not much sinning because of natural desires... But stimuli of desire which man’s cunning has devised are something else, and for the sake of these sins, one sins very much.’ Now, consider the fact that Aquinas wrote this in the 13 century – absent the rampant pornography (soft and hard core), TV, Movies, immodest dress, sexual innuendo, frequent immoral advances by people... it can be difficult and it can be demoralizing.

“The most rewarding part is the fact that we are signs of the kingdom of God. When non-Catholics encounter a celibate, they must know that we firmly believe in all that Christ has revealed as we have dedicated our lives to this Truth. I think, at least for the first part of my priesthood, I gained an advantage because I was not only talking about the Gospel, but I was witnessing to the Gospel by my way of life.”

Archbishop Daniel Buechlein, O.S.B.

The final celibate life story is on the Archbishop of Indianapolis, Reverend Daniel Buechlein, O.S.B. Archbishop Daniel Buechlein was born April 20, 1938 in Jasper, Indiana. He is the younger of two children (older brother), and he went to St. Joseph and Holy Family Catholic Schools in Jasper for elementary school. For high school and college he went to St. Meinrad Seminary, where he received a BA in Philosophy. He continued his education at the International Benedictine University of Sant'Anselmo in Rome, and he received a S.T.L. in Liturgy. His final profession to celibate chastity as a Monk of the Benedictine Order came on August 15, 1962 at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. He was ordained to the Priesthood on May 3, 1964.

His work as a priest, bishop, and archbishop has included being a Seminary Professor of Theology and Philosophy, a Director of Spiritual Formation at a College Seminary, and serving as the President-Rector of St. Meinrad College and School of Theology. He also has served as the Bishop of the Diocese of Memphis, Tennessee, and as the Archbishop of Indianapolis, Indiana. Archbishop Daniel Buechlein describes the development of his vocation to celibate life as follows:

“Already in my elementary grades I had the desire to become a Catholic Priest, influenced by my pastors and seminarians I knew, largely through my experience as a Boy Scout. As I matured I realized that living a celibate life was part of the vocation to priesthood and to monastic life as a Benedictine. I also realized that the call to celibate chastity was a call unique in itself. Prayer and discernment with a spiritual director led me to understand the implications of this call. My seminary years and the four years prior to my monastic profession of vows provided an experience that led me to believe I was called to this unique way of life.

“During my preparatory years I was faced with the challenge of giving up marriage, the unique love of a marriage partner and the possibility of having my own family. This sacrifice was the subject of a lot of discernment, and sometimes, anxious prayer. Forgoing marriage seemed possible for the sake of a spiritual witness to God’s Kingdom, which I sought to do as a Benedictine monk. I also could foresee the opportunity to live a pastoral love that would serve many. I believe God gives me the grace of the charism of celibacy as a way of handing on his love, especially to people on the margins.

“Once ordained a priest and given the opportunity to serve the Church in pastoral ministry it became quite clear to me that God had given me this call in order to help many people with a free spirit and a pastoral, largely unencumbered heart. It has also become clear that the witness of a pastoral love is very important in a society that seemingly has lost a sense of generous love. The witness of celibate love is also a witness that there is a Kingdom yet to come and life is a journey toward that Kingdom.

“In addition to the spiritual motivation, I can testify practically after forty years of living the formal vow of celibate chastity, in ministry since 1964, that were I married I would not have been able to have the freedom to serve as fully in the positions I have held.

“Many priests, monks and bishops served as an inspiration and encouragement for me to pursue the pastoral love of celibate chastity as a dimension of my journey in ministry and religious life. And so have numerous married friends of the laity been a great support for me. My parents, my extended family and other friends supported me all through seminary and ever since.

“From early seminary days and monastic life I have been schooled in the discipline and habit of personal and public prayer in community with fellow believers. As a monk and priest and now as a bishop, my life is first and foremost for God. My daily holy hour is my personal time with God and it is a non-negotiable priority. In prayer I remember who I am and who God is and I remember why I am giving myself to ministry of God’s people. The test of time has shown me that God makes something good of my prayer, my part is to be there and do it.

“The challenge of living a celibate life is to walk against the stream of a culture that is largely pornographic and oriented to individualism and self-gratification. Hence the importance of prayer and the support of like-minded friends along the way.

“The reward of living the life of a pastoral love for the many is just that, sharing love with so many trusting people who want to share the journey home to the Kingdom. The reward is also being surprised so often by God’s unexpected and unmerited grace that enables me to keep on wanting to serve people in God’s name as best I can. I find great peace in doing what seems clearly to be God’s will for me.”

The last two celibate autobiographical sketches describe the lives of two women drawn to live single for the Lord within the Sisterhood of the People of Praise.

Ellen Reed

Ellen Reed gives us a glimpse into the celibate vocation that God has called her to live for him. “I was born in 1940, in southern California. I am the oldest of six. My father is Methodist, and his whole family is Protestant. My mother is Catholic, and grew up in Germany. All her family lives there. We moved to Phoenix in 1948. I went to public schools in California and in Arizona until about the third grade. Part way through the third grade I began going to Catholic schools. I went to a Catholic high school in Phoenix, and to Gonzaga University for college. I did graduate work at the University of Colorado in Boulder. I have a master’s and a Ph.D. degree in mathematics from Colorado.

“After graduation from Colorado, I became an assistant professor of mathematics at the University of Massachusetts. I was there from 1966 to 1977, when I left to join the People of Praise in South Bend. I joined the Sisterhood in August of 1978. We don’t have permanent commitments; and in fact I don’t recall making any official commitment. Nowadays, the newer members make a commitment of one or two years, and renew that commitment before making what we call a “solemn” commitment. But as far as I’m concerned, I have been “permanently” committed since 1978.

“I first began to realize God might be calling me to be celibate when I was about 12. I was in 7th grade at the time, and the nuns were encouraging us to consider a religious vocation. I didn’t really want to become a nun, since their lives seemed very confining. But I had a growing desire to “find God.” And I was also going through puberty. At the time, I was the oldest of five children, and my Mom had very little time to talk to me. I couldn’t understand what was going on inside me, but I knew that Jesus understood. I started to go to daily Mass, mainly because of how one of my teachers explained the Mass. At Communion I felt that Jesus understood what was going on in me, even though I couldn’t explain it. I didn’t talk to anyone about this, but I tried to find out about various religious orders. As nearly as I could tell, if you joined an order of women you would end up as a teacher or a nurse. I was not interested in either. I was very attracted to the contemplative orders, but I did not know how to pursue that interest. So as a compromise, I did make a kind of decision not to marry until I had figured out whether or not I had a religious vocation.

“I recall an incident when I was around 12 or so. We were living in Arizona, and my grandmother (on my Dad’s side) was visiting from California. I liked this grandmother very much, but I was keenly aware that she was Protestant, not Catholic, and that she probably would not understand a reluctance to marry. Anyway, my grandmother had brought me a wedding ring that had been in the family for many years. I am the oldest granddaughter, and my grandmother wanted to give me this ring to wear on my wedding day. I remember thanking her, but thinking inside that there would never be such a day for me, because I belonged to God.

“The whole experience of wondering if I had a “vocation” was hard to sort out. I felt bad that I didn’t talk to anyone about it. But it was too personal for me to talk about. I didn’t know what to do with it. I didn’t know how to follow up on it. I remember going to the public library, and browsing through the books in the religious section. I found a book by Thomas Merton, who I knew was a holy monk. The book was called *Seeds of Contemplation*, and it was a great help to me. I decided that I wanted to be a “contemplative”, whatever that was.

“I think now that God was calling me to the Sisterhood of the People of Praise, even though it would not exist for another 20 years or so. The way I think about it now, God has a plan for the world, to save the world. The Father has a tremendous desire to share his life with all of us. We are to live the life of the Father! And part of what keeps

us from living that kind of life is our focus on “individual perfection.” So it is a key part of his plan that we live a life *in common*.

“Why did I have to wait so long? As a pre-Vatican II Catholic, I had a lot of unlearning to do. As a product of the West, I was very much an “individualist.” As a teenager, I thought I would like to be a hermit. I usually wanted to be alone. It is a long way from there to wanting to live in community. That desire had to grow in me.

“One person who was influential in making Jesus a reality was my seventh grade teacher, Sister Mary Inez. She was the one who taught us about the Mass as the perfect sacrifice. This very much appealed to my idealism. As I mentioned, that is when I started going to daily Mass. It meant I had to ride my bike a good two-and-a half miles on an empty stomach. Those were the days when you fasted from midnight until Mass the next morning, and there were no buses that would get me to the early Mass.

“Some of my teachers in high school encouraged me to think about becoming a nun. A number of my friends actually joined an order, for a short time. But I was not so inclined. What encouraged me the most was learning about living “single for the Lord” from the group in Ann Arbor. At the time, I was a member of a prayer group in Massachusetts, and occasionally we would get news about what other groups were doing. Then my very good friend Nano Farabaugh told me that she had decided to live “single for the Lord.” That encouraged me to hope that that might be a possibility for me. I moved from Massachusetts to join the People of Praise in August 1977, and joined the Sisterhood a year later.

“Prayer. When I joined the prayer group in Massachusetts, and was baptized in the Spirit, I began to pray on a regular basis. I had a renewed desire to live my life for God, and an intense desire to know more about God, and to experience God. This happened regularly at first, whenever I would pray. The prayer group was very small, mostly students. I was the only faculty member, but considered myself quite junior to the students. The students all seemed to have a more familiar relationship with the Lord. We had many discussions, late into the night. And I read whatever I could get my hands on, in the way of books about the charismatic renewal.

“Personal prayer has been an important part of living out my relationship with the Lord. Usually I can sort of “talk things over” with him, and he will set me straight without any condemnation. Often I also talk about him with others in the Sisterhood. But sometimes even that is not enough. There have been times when my mind was so full of confusion that I asked my household to pray with me every day for strength to fight the Enemy, and for clear thinking. At those times it was *their* prayer that got me through.

“My prayer has matured a lot over the past five years or so, because of the renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we have been experiencing. I have moved from a focus on my own spiritual growth in virtue to a greater desire to “build the kingdom” and to “save the world,” even at the price of my own personal development. We all have a new understanding that personal perfection is not our focus any longer.

Also, as a group, the Sisterhood is growing in an understanding that we are Christ in the world, and (in theory) we can do the kinds of things that Christ did. This is not a function of being celibate I think, as much as it is of living a common life.

“What is the hardest part of being celibate? I think it is not fitting in with the rest of the world, and not being understood even by members of the People of Praise at times. It is looking like some kind of failure to the world. (Why didn’t you ever marry? Did you want to?) It is knowing that I will never be surrounded by children and grandchildren.

“What is the most rewarding part? It is the life I have with my sisters in the Sisterhood. This is a very rich life, much richer than I could ever have imagined.

“Closing thoughts: This is *one* way to live in Christ. I used to think it was the *best* way. Now I have a lot more respect for mothers than I used to. I see how families build the kingdom of God. On the other hand, I am glad that I can live the way I do, with other women committed to a life in common. And I am also glad to be part of a group that is such a source of strength for the People of Praise.”

Chris Ramsey

Chris Ramsey is 51 years old, she attended public school through high school, and she received her Bachelor degree in Speech therapy from the University of Massachusetts in 1973. Chris made permanent commitment to be single for Lord in 1981. She is the oldest of 3 children, and she has one brother and one sister. Her jobs have included working from 1973-1976 as a speech therapist in a state school for the retarded in Massachusetts. She also served in South Bend from 1976-2000, as the Secretary to Paul Decelles, who is the Overall Coordinator (President) of the People of Praise. From the year 2000 to the present, Chris has worked in the accounting department for the People of Praise Community in South Bend, Indiana.

Chris describes her first inclination of a call to celibacy. “The first year I was in the People of Praise (1976) I attended a community conference. During one of the talks (I have no idea what the subject of the talk was - it wasn't specifically on celibacy though) I heard the Lord ask if I would be willing to be single for the Lord. It wasn't a call to be celibate, just asking if I would be willing to consider the possibility.”

Chris remembers the feelings she experienced after this initial call. “Quite frankly, I cried for days afterwards. The reason was two-fold. First, I was not Catholic at this point. I became a Catholic in 1981, but that had nothing to do with being celibate. It was something I had been consider since the early 1970's. As a main line Protestant, I had no models of celibacy in my life, and even in the People of Praise the Sisterhood was very new, and wasn't living together yet, so they didn't have a clearly defined life together. I knew what marriage looked like. But not celibacy. There wasn't anything concrete to attract me.

“Second, and, perhaps because of this, I saw celibacy only in negative terms, what I wouldn't have - a husband, children, my own home, etc. I had no vision of the rich life the Lord was actually offering me. My final yes was something like, "Okay Lord. I'm willing to be unhappy the rest of my life because I love you"! How he must have smiled when he foresaw the joy that fills my life now! My state in life is truly the buried treasure for which I would give anything to keep. But it was really buried, even from me in the beginning!!

“Why did the Lord call me to live out celibacy: Because of his great Love I guess. Ever since I was a child I have desired more of God. I have never been satisfied with where I am with God, and my whole life has been a striving to find the place where I can have more and more of him. I think being single for him is analogous to being planted in a garden. I used to think of myself as a plant in a pot. When I joined the sisterhood, I suddenly felt I had been taken out of the pot and put into a huge garden. The possibilities were endless. Lately, as I've come to understand more about being Christ in the world, I know my freedom as a single woman can also be useful for building the kingdom. But the why of my call has always been much more about "being" than "doing". I'm not single for the Lord for a ministry or a function. I am single for the Lord because of my relationship with God and because of my desire to please him, and to Love him and his people. That's the purpose of the sisterhood too. The why of my call is like the why of a marriage. Because we love each other. Not so we can have children or do something useful together for the kingdom! Those are by-products.

“Who was influential in helping me realize this vocation, the People of Praise. Without the People of Praise I would never have imagined such a call. I would never have known how to pray about such a call, and I would never have responded to such a call. The community provided the sisterhood specifically, so women can live in the community and respond to the Lord's call to be celibate, not because it benefits the community, but to provide a stable life to those of us who are called. We are loved, supported, guided and blessed by our brothers and sisters in the community.”

In looking at her prayer life, Chris has this to say. “Over the years I have received a ton of teaching, both in the community and in the Sisterhood on prayer, and have read a lot of classic literature on the subject. Our pattern of life provides that we have at least an hour a day for personal prayer, and we pray together in the morning. We've prayed the Office, we've prayed charismatically, and we've prayed intercession. Always we've tried to respond to what the spirit is doing at the time.

“Jesus said, "I always do what pleases the Father" and "I can only do what I see the Father doing". As Christ's body in the world, now I have to strive to say the same things and that requires that I know at every moment what will please my Father and what he is doing. So for me, that is what prayer is. During the day as I work, as I read scripture in my "Prayer Time," in our prayer times together, in Church - I'm always listening for what will please my Father, looking to see for what the Father is doing now, so I can participate in his work.

“What is the hardest thing about being celibate? We joke in the Sisterhood that the hardest thing in our life together is whatever your greatest weakness is. It’s different for each person. So if you tend to be lazy, our schedule will be the hardest thing for you. If you have trouble with avarice, our living financially in common will drive you nuts, etc. So what is hardest for me? Well (true confession time) I tend to think there is a right and a wrong way to do most things (my way of course) and so the common life, living an intensely shared life where people don't do things MY way is sometimes very hard. And most of the time it is the little things, the person who doesn't measure the water when she makes the oatmeal, the person who slams the doors, etc.

“What is the most rewarding part of this life? Ready for this - The same thing that is the hardest! The common life! I LOVE the shared life, our life together in Christ, which is the life of the Trinity with flesh on it. I love each and every single sister, especially those I've lived with for 20 years. 2nd Corinthians talks about seeing the glory of God in the face of Christ, and sometimes at dinner I look around the table and see all my sisters, and know I'm seeing that glory!”

Chris Ramsey’s closing thoughts revolved around God’s desire that celibacy be embraced out of love for him, rather than a command from him. “When I was praying about making a permanent commitment, I begged the Lord for weeks to tell me if he wanted me to do this or not, and he was stone silent, not a peep out of him. I was in a real quandary. I wanted to do it, but I didn't know what his will was. Finally one day I was walking downtown in the middle of the noontime crowd complaining to him because he wouldn't let me know (how many people ask your opinion Lord after all!), and I suddenly had an overwhelming sense of his presence, one of the strongest I have ever had. And I clearly heard him (with my heart, not my ears!) and he said, “Chris, I'm never going to tell you to do it. Then you would do it out of obedience. There is only one reason to make this kind of commitment and that is to do it out of love. The question is – How much do you love me?” That cleared everything up for me and for me this is the beginning, the middle and the end of the celibate life.”

This concludes the autobiographical life-stories of these five celibate people. The personal nature of their call to celibate life, the deepness of their relationship with God, and their dedication to purity and serving others are apparent in all five of their lives.

Autobiographical Sketches of three couples Committed to Marriage:

The second part of this autobiographical life story section is a look at the lives of three couples. One couple is engaged to be married, and the other two are couples that have been married for a total of over 42 years. The first life story is focused on Alex Scheidler and Nicole Doucette. By the time this thesis paper is complete, Alex and Nicole will be married, but at the time of the interview they were engaged. They were given the freedom to offer as much or as little information as they wanted. Their answers are as follows.

Alex Scheidler and Nicole Doucette

Alex Scheidler is 27 years old, and he has three brothers and four sisters. He graduated from Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, and he went on to graduate from the University of Notre Dame. During his time at Notre Dame, he took a year off to give seminary through the Legionnaires of Christ a chance to develop. After that year, he went back to Notre Dame, completed his degree, and he then began working at Big Idea in Chicago, Illinois.

Nicole Doucette graduated from Brebeuf Jesuit High School in Indianapolis. Nicole spent some time doing undergraduate work at both Hope College in Holland, Michigan and IUPUI in Indianapolis. After graduating from IUPUI, she later went on to complete a Master's degree in Biology from IUPUI.

In looking at the difference between her and Alex's engagement as Catholics and some others she has seen, Nicole Doucette had these three observations, "Other denominations allow for divorce a lot more. It is much easier to get a divorce when you are not Catholic, and this is one of the differences between a sacramental and non-sacramental marriage.

"Being Catholic also allows me the freedom to know that when I get married it would be perfectly fine for me to stay home to raise our children.

"The preparation we received from some more experienced married couples in our Church was also helpful for us. We also went through six sessions of Natural Family Planning as a couple."

Alex Scheidler sees marriage as "the defining factor in fulfilling God's will in your life. I believe that in meeting Nicole, it has become apparent that God wants me to be perfected not just through him and the world, but through Nicole, as I receive her as

Christ to me. Through that we will be Christ to the world. My vocation is focussed on Nicole and I, and our children. Our love isn't just an emotional pleasure, it is the fulfillment of a vocation."

Alex has an interesting story in that he gave up a lucrative paying job in Chicago to come back to Indianapolis. He did this as a way to honor Nicole's desire to live close to her family, and Alex also saw a real benefit in remaining closer to his family as well. Alex was actually offered twice his salary to stay in Chicago. Looking back he says, "It was radical to choose this kind of engagement and career path. It is not easy."

This break with the quest for money has also had a deep affect on Nicole's perspective. "Women my age are in a dilemma. My vocation is to be married and have children, not making gobs of money. The world has trained me to want this and it has been a struggle, but God has blessed me in this decision."

Alex had this to say about normal pre-marital relationships in Chicago and in the world in general. "Pre-marital sex would have happened if we weren't Catholic. In Chicago pre-marital sex is the norm. Nicole was actually going to come and work in Chicago at one point. I had a \$1400 a month apartment we could have split, and it was going to cost \$800-900 for her to rent a different apartment." Nicole reflects on her thoughts at the time as far as co-habitation goes, "Not living together before marriage was a given for us. Moving in together wasn't even a thought for us."

Prayer recently has changed for each of them, and prayer has had a good affect on their engagement time. Nicole recalls, "My prayer life was very personal between me and Jesus before I was engaged. When Alex and I started dating a lot of my time with Christ was now spent with Alex. So my personal prayer time went down some. Through going together to daily mass, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and through saying morning and evening prayer together, my relationship with Christ has changed. Christ now is Alex."

Alex too, has had a shift in his prayer life. "I am much more personal with Christ now. With Nicole my relationship with Christ has gone many steps deeper. Through finding Nicole, it was imprinted on my heart that God loves me. It was like discovering a gold mine. She is like millions of dollars to me. Through gratitude this has deepened my relationship with God. She is a reminder of heaven for me. Neither sight, nor sound, can fathom the pleasure of heaven, but this is what I am experiencing. My desire to pray has been over-flowing since meeting her, and she has been a well-spring of grace for me."

Alex and Nicole have a unique perspective on the building of a family together. Alex relates, "Because we are Catholic we don't know how big our family will be. We want to pray and discern this while using Natural Family Planning." Nicole adds that, "We can't selfishly control our lives. Letting God be in control is what we want. At the same time we will use our intellects and prayer. When I was growing up, I always had my Mom around. It may be a control issue for some because of a need for a double income, but I want to be a Mom." Alex also recognized his desire for a good family

environment in his decision to change careers and come to Indianapolis for the sake of family and living in a good community. For the both of them, building a family comes down to accepting God's plan and leaving their own behind.

Nicole sees the call to holiness in facing the challenges of building a healthy relationship before marriage. "As Catholics, we are called to a higher level of purity. Not having sex, but even beyond that treating each other as brother and sister." Through being in this friendship, and not placing such an emphasis on the physical side of the relationship before marriage, Alex believes that it, "Builds trust. Those engaging in this kind of thing don't trust each other because they know in their hearts that there doing something wrong. Trust then breaks down. This sense of trust helps us enjoy each other's company." Nicole sees peace as a fruit of being called to marriage. "I now have a real sense of peace. Before our engagement, I had lots of anxiousness in thinking about whom I would marry. Now that is replaced by a real sense of peace."

Alex wants to continue practicing chastity within their marriage, in the sense of rejecting lust and embracing the act of thinking purely about each other. Nicole has concluded that, "In marriage, lust for your partner still exists. Temptation to do things for your own pleasure is still there. Instead we are called to giving a gift of self."

Alex and Nicole's closing thoughts were on the celibate vocation, their support of this vocation, and the blessing they see for the Church through those who have embraced this life. Alex believes in relation to those living celibate for life that "their role is multi-layered. They are an example of the purity we are called to, and they are a concrete example of chastity." Nicole believes that, "Because they are not two people but one, they have more time to build God's Kingdom outside of family life." Alex adds that, "Those who have committed their lives to a life of celibacy which includes priests, nuns, brothers, and those choosing to live single, have a unique call. They have the freedom to love everyone, not just their family. They support us through teaching, instruction, and the sacraments." Nicole continues that thought, "They throw themselves into ministry in a different way. Spiritually they are a huge support." Alex also had some more profound insights. "There is something spiritual about the celibate life and laying down one's life. Everyone has a desire for marriage, but his or her sacrifice gives to the Church and supports all people in a spiritual way. Offering our suffering for others has power. They have received a gift they are giving to God and that builds up the Kingdom. I personally hope to promote living celibate for God. Maybe two or three of our future kids would be celibate. Life is eternal. This is only a time frame on earth. I hope they could see the beauty in giving their life back to God. A vocation... (pause) is a beautiful thing through which they can serve the world." Nicole concludes, "It would be really great if as a couple we would explain that there are different callings. God calls people to married life, religious life, and single life. Our kids should be open to all three 100%."

Alex and Nicole have a mature faith, perspective, and knowledge of what God is calling them to in marriage. All three of these things have come through living life as a

committed Catholic Christian, and through growing up in Roman Catholic family environments. I praise God for their desire to have a holy marriage.

The two married couples Zig and Gale Mazanowski and John and Teresa Schutzman, offer a glimpse of the defining characteristics of a Roman Catholic marriage lived in response to, and in embracement of, the Church's teachings.

Zygmunt and Gale Mazanowski III

Zygmunt Mazanowski III, my father, was born October 7, 1955, and Gale Justin, my mother, was born December 10, 1956. Zig is 46 years old, and Gale is 45 years old. The two of them have been married for 25 years. They have five boys and two girls. They lived the first 10 years of their marriage in Muncie, Indiana, and they have lived the last 15 years in the Indianapolis area. Zig is co-owner of a landscape company called Mainscape, and Gale has been a mother, home-maker, and teacher of her children for all 25 years of their marriage.

Being in a sacramental marriage has had a deep influence on Gale Mazanowski. "Because it's a sacrament there hasn't ever been any doubt that I am committed to marriage for life. There is no question in my mind as to whether divorce is an option, because marriage is for life. Being married and Catholic has also helped me to be faithful to the sacraments of the Church." Zig had a unique perspective on being in a Catholic marriage. "Once I understood, I saw our marriage as a partnership between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Gale, and myself. Likewise, divorce has never been an option."

Looking at the unique morality teachings present within Catholic marriages, Gale had this to say. "One moral decision that we have lived is not using contraception. Being open to life is what the Church teaches and it's what we believe also. I learned Natural Family Planning when I was pregnant with Nathan, because we wanted to stop having kids at that point. So for six years we didn't have children." Zig remembers that, "We didn't want to use contraception. We wanted to follow the Church's teaching." Six years after Nathan was born, Gale became pregnant with Michael, and she remembers what she was thinking at the time. "I felt God wanted me to be open to life."

Reflecting on his prayer life, Zig had this to say, "I've learned about prayer mainly through the People of Praise Christian Community. At times I've gone to adoration of the Eucharist, and I've always enjoyed being in the presence of Jesus in that way. I also used to pray the Rosary every day at work while landscaping or cutting grass."

Gale too has experienced Catholicism touching her prayer life. "Receiving the Eucharist has helped me to grow in understanding that God is in me. The prayer of forgiveness before receiving the Eucharist on Sunday has helped me to be reconciled to

God. Praying the Rosary gives me a great desire to imitate the virtues in Christ and Mary in my marriage. The Rosary gives me peace in hard times. It also gives me faith and hope. Both adoration and the Rosary help me to pray for my children. The daily mass scriptural readings also help me to pray.”

Both Zig and Gale agreed that, “When we go to adoration and pray the Rosary together it has affected our marriage positively.”

Zig had some final thoughts on prayer in general. “When things aren’t going very good it is comforting for Gale and I to pray. It brings us closer and helps us to remember the Lord is with us during that time. I try to pray with the kids before they go to bed, and I also intercede throughout my day for them.”

On deciding to build a Catholic family, Zig had these thoughts. “I wanted to get married and have a family. That was a big priority for me. I wanted a big family because it was what we did as Catholics and as Mazanowski’s. I knew there was good fruit from that because I had experienced it myself. Because I wanted to have a big family, I didn’t want Gale to have to work, since there would be so much to do within our home. We never really considered the option of her working.” Gale too has been happy with this. “Being home was a blessing. By staying home, I could be the primary care giver, teacher, and trainer of my children, without the pressure of working. I can remember that we were very poor at times, and I would go to Zig and say, ‘I need to get a job because (fill in the excuse).’ His response was always, ‘No.’ Zig explains, “Family is a priority. If Gale was working, then the family would suffer, and I didn’t want that.”

The challenge of accepting the call to marriage had different impacts on Zig and Gale. For Gale, the call to selflessness became a reality. “It was all about me before I got married. It was a challenge to cook for Zig and to clean for him. I no longer had my space.” Zig saw the new challenges a little differently. “It was actually good to be married, because my life now had purpose and focus. It helped me to mature. Family, school, work, and Church was what I did, but that didn’t bother me, because being married and being a Dad were the most important things to me.”

Zig and Gale have felt a limited amount of support from celibate men and women. A couple of priests in Muncie, Father Tim Alkire and Father William Grady, had a positive effect early in their marriage. For Zig, he saw his guidance and support coming from a different source than celibate men or women. “A lot of pastoral care for us came through the People of Praise Christian Community, not directly from priests or religious.” Zig and Gale have not been active in supporting many celibate people, partly because they haven’t been able to form relationships with many people living out this vocation. They struggle to understand the role of nuns and brothers in today’s world. If one of Zig’s sons were called to be a priest he had this to say. “It would be good as long as he’s in a good supportive religious order where he does not have to stand alone.”

John and Teresa Schutzman

John and Teresa Schutzman were married June 30, 1984 (almost 18 years). John is 44 years old, Teresa is 46, and both lived celibate and chaste lives until marriage. They have six children. John is a Medical Doctor and a Cardiologist. Teresa has a Master's in Education and has taught in a Catholic grade school. Both John and Teresa were cradle Roman Catholics raised in large families.

Their perspective on marriage is very Catholic centered, and they had the chance to reflect on this together as a couple recently. "Both of us have understood (since very young) that marriage is forever until the death of the other. Divorce is not an option for us and never has been. When we were married, we were warned a number of times that few couples make it through the length of training John completed without a divorce. To our knowledge, all but one other couple was divorced before or shortly after the completion of their education.

"Our faith has always been paramount to us individually and as a couple. Our relationship was based on our beliefs and our celibate time of dating strengthened our love and commitment to each other. We believe this partnered effort was blessed by God and was made possible by His grace.

"Being Catholic and instilling those values in our children are at the heart of our marriage. Accepting children as God sent them (8 in 8 years) was where our hearts were and are. Teresa was almost 29 when we were married and John was 27. We did not practice natural family planning because we were open to children.

"Praying within our marriage takes place as a family more so than as a couple. Teresa is more comfortable with private prayer while John desires more prayer as a couple. We attempt to attend daily mass/ or receive daily communion although rarely together due to schedules. We attempt to pray as a family after dinner, whenever possible. Discussions on faith, morals, and Church news occur frequently between us.

"We were raised in large Catholic families with loving parents who always saw each child as a gift from God. NEVER was a pregnancy groaned about, only rejoice over. WE do not see ourselves as having a big family. Our family is small compared to John's family of 10, and Teresa's family of 13. God chose the size of our family. He is our King.

"The greatest challenge of marriage is to keep a healthy balance between God, family, and self. The need for us as a couple to recognize the other's needs and to keep each other holy (sanctified) is ongoing. John is faced with more temptations because he is out in the secular world. Teresa rarely faces the secular world in all its ugliness because of her work in an orthodox Catholic School.

"We both have siblings who are celibate. They are a blessing to all. They are true givers of themselves in every way. Teresa has a sister Carolyn who we all feel is saintly. She is a moral rock and a gentle disciple. She gives of herself beyond belief and the

family in return loves her beyond explanation. She did desire marriage but did not desire it at all costs. She is the ultimate role model for our family.

“Teresa has a sister Mary who is also celibate and she has adopted 2 children. Mary was a nominal Catholic for years but since the adoption of her 2 sons God has reeled her in and she is enthusiastically Catholic today.

“John’s younger sister Elizabeth is a joy and is also leading a celibate life. She is presently volunteering at an inner city school in Chicago helping children who struggle in school. Elizabeth is a R.N. working now for God. She loves family and the family supports her greatly.

“WE support the three mentioned above as we do all our family. Everyone is welcome anytime! There is a common understanding that if anyone is in need emotionally, spiritually, or financially, there are many siblings ready to help and support.

“If God called one or more of our children to the priesthood or religious life, we would be THRILLED! There would be no greater gift to us or that we could give God.

“There is no challenge too big for a person or couple to overcome if God is at the center of their life. The gift of the Roman Catholic Church to us (from Jesus) is the path to the Kingdom. We do not view the Church as oppressive. We view the Church as the avenue to Christ. We put our total trust that it is lead by the Holy Spirit. Daily Eucharist has strengthened both of us in ways we cannot explain. It is the source of strength within our marriage and within us as individuals. Whatever good is in us or is seen by others in us is the result of the daily Eucharist. Being of LIKE-MIND, as husband and wife on these important issues and Catholic practices continues to strengthen our marriage.

“Do not over look the value of the gift of the marriage act for a married couple. If this great gift is denied or used as ransom, the damage to the marriage will be profound. The need to meet the needs of each other sexually within the marriage is critical to mutual sanctification. The failure or indifference of one spouse could cause a marriage to unravel. Honest communication is necessary. Just as a woman assumes a man should know how she feels, a man cannot assume a woman always anticipates his needs. A hectic schedule can cause a failure to recognize the other’s needs. The marriage act is a spiritual glue to a marriage. It is a great mystery but truly a huge part of a couple’s relationship.”

Autobiographical Sketch:

Zygmunt Joseph Michael Mazanowski IV

The last part of this thesis paper is an autobiographical sketch of my journey to find the vocation that God wants me to embrace. Let me say in the beginning that I have not finalized a commitment to celibacy, but at the age of 25, I do have a strong sense God is leading me in this direction.

That sense started to form within my heart when I was 17 years old and in my junior year at Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis, Indiana. During January of 1995, I had a chance to go on a trip to the annual Pro-Life March in Washington, DC. This march always takes place close, or on, the anniversary of Roe vs. Wade. Another big part of the Pro-Life March is what happens the night before in the Basilica of the National Shrine to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This beautiful basilica is filled with 15 Marian Chapels used for personal prayer. The basilica is located on the campus of Catholic University. On the night before the march, there traditionally takes place a National Pro-Life mass. At the National Pro-Life mass on January 20, 1995, there were numerous bishops, priests, and religious brothers and sisters, as well as singles, married people, and children.

The National Shrine to the Immaculate Conception is rather large, but usually at this mass, if you end up getting there late that means you are going to have to stand throughout the entire mass, because you won't get one of the 5,000-6,000 seats. Of course, the first time I went to this mass, I did arrive late and I didn't get a seat. Thankfully, that night I was able to calmly slip close to the middle of the Church, while knowing that I would be sitting on the marble floor. Before mass began, I felt the Holy Spirit say to me that night, "Why don't you kneel on the marble when there are times to kneel, and why don't you kneel on the marble when others are sitting as a way to pray for pregnant women and the unborn children of this nation." Well, being the zealous 17-year-old that I was, I readily went with this voice of the Holy Spirit. The experience of kneeling was powerful at first, but quickly pain set in. At times I stood with everyone else, but the homily was long, and quickly my knees were hurting. By the end of the mass, I was exhausted, especially since, as Catholics, we kneel after we receive communion until the priest himself sits down.

Near the end of this time of kneeling after communion, something unexpected inside of me occurred. I was kneeling and praying, when it became clear to me that God was speaking to me personally. What he said that night was not very long, but it has affected me to this day. He said, "If I call you to become a Priest, I want you to know that you will be happy." At that moment, I experienced an intense joy unlike any other experience I have had before, and I have never experienced this kind of joy since, in that degree of intensity. This joy produced a deeper, more passionate, and strong love for God within my soul. As I reflected on what God had clearly said to my heart and mind, I quickly turned to my experience of kneeling that night. I felt that the Holy Spirit then said, "Just as you have experienced great pain out of love for others, you will experience

great pain and great joy if I call you to become a priest. The pain will involve the sacrifice of giving up a wife and children, while the joy will come in helping many people.” What God said to me that night confirmed in a deeper way an experience I had almost two years before, while at a retreat in Muncie, Indiana. This experience involved freely giving my life to Jesus, and asking him to fill me with the Holy Spirit. It also involved a willingness on my part to be led by the Holy Spirit to God’s will and plan for my life. I began to realize more concretely that night in Washington, D.C. what giving my life to Christ really meant for me.

The following summer of 1995, I went to a retreat run by the men of the Brotherhood of the People of Praise with 13 other guys from Branches of the People of Praise around the world. The retreat was in South Bend, Indiana, and it lasted for two weeks. This was the summer before my senior year, and I was a prideful, judgmental, passionate, serious, and prayerful person heading into the camp. I thought that God would use me to help the other guys who would be coming. Little did I know it was I who needed help to be encouraged to change. It was not until about five days before the end of my time in South Bend that God spoke to me in an unusual way. He spoke to me the day I ran into a big, wooden, metal structure while trying to catch a frisbee near Lake Michigan. When I hit this peculiar structure, I scraped and cut my lip and face badly. It was the type of scrape that was not going to heal for a while. Soon after this, something inside me knew that God wanted to tell me something. The next day, while praying, the Holy Spirit showed and convicted me of the depth of my sins of judgmentalness towards my friends, which led to my lack of love for them. It became clear to me while in prayer that I had spent much of my junior year not loving others, because of the judgmentalness I had towards my friends in my mind and heart. This prayer experience of realizing the depth of my sin caused me a lot of pain and sorrow for two or three days, but it prepared my heart to love unconditionally and in many new ways during my senior year.

The other part of this camp experience was meeting a group of committed, athletic, spiritual, funny, admirable, and especially, **real** celibate men. This helped me to see the acceptance of the gift of living a celibate life in a new and attractive light. Interestingly enough, none of these men were priests at the time, or formal religious brothers; instead they were living single for the Lord together. Their love, devotion, and fire for God came out as I learned about their lives. This also shown through as they related with all the teen age guys who were there. Meeting these men helped me to begin to realize the meaning and value of the vocation to celibacy.

On that original trip to Washington, D.C., in 1995, I went with three other classmates from Bishop Chatard High School. In 1996, a lot bigger trip was organized, and we took around 25 people from Bishop Chatard to the march. My best friend, Andy Traub, went on that second trip, and I told him about my experience of kneeling the year before. He agreed that it might be a cool thing for him to try kneeling during the National Pro-Life mass as well. On this second trip, unlike the year before, we arrived very early and we reserved some good seats. As the time for mass was starting, Andy and I noticed a woman with four little children walking around giving out hand-made multi-colored rosaries. The rosaries she was giving out were made of thick string dyed

with a spectrum of colors. They were made out of love for others. As I got closer to her and her children, she actually gave me a rosary. By now, mass was close to starting, and it was not a difficult decision to make when Andy and I and some of our friends decided to give up our seats for this woman and her children. Andy quickly remembered the kneeling idea, and I agreed to kneel with him. Unlike the year before, there was no grace period of being excited to have the chance to kneel for God and pray for unborn children and their mothers. Instead, this time, there was instant and continual pain. By God's grace, I managed to struggle through the pain and persevere to the end of the mass. Just like the year before, God spoke a few words to my heart near the end of the mass. This time he only said, "Is this what you want?" I knew what he meant deep down, but it was not until later that night, while I was praying in a chapel offering Eucharistic adoration, that these words became clear and took on significant meaning for me. I still have the words I wrote to God while praying in the Eucharistic chapel that night, and I want to share them here.

January 21, 1996

Mass was so awesome and it was quite interesting. I was in extreme pain and my only option was to totally rely on you. Help me, oh Lord, to use this experience as a model for the rest of my life. During the mass it seemed like you were saying, "Is this what you want?" If you meant to suffer to bring about your Kingdom, then the answer is yes. If you meant to give up worldly desires and seek you in everything, then the answer is yes. If you mean to rely on you in all situations, the answer is also yes. I am not quite sure yet if that question means, "Am I ready to say I want to be a priest?", but I am open to this calling.

I then listed some of the things a priest holds dear to his heart. I needed the words in brackets to make my random thoughts from that night make more sense.

"The Eucharist is truly receiving Christ. Confession is truly receiving God's forgiveness and the healing of the soul. [A priest lives his life] teaching the true and complete teachings of Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit. [A priest] has multitudes of opportunities to serve daily and constantly. Leading retreats brings people into a deeper more real commitment to you. The Mass is the most complete prayer. Spiritual study is a continuous opportunity, and [a priest says] the Divine Mercy Chaplet and the Rosary."

It was interesting because I clearly remember speaking with two very beautiful young women from my high school before I went to adoration, and before I wrote those words in my prayer journal that night. I did not believe that walking into the Eucharistic chapel with them was a coincidence then, and looking back I still don't believe this was a coincidence. Instead, I believe this experience was what one of my friends refers to as a "God incidence." As a man, the call to celibacy penetrates the heart, mind, and soul, because it is a call to not have a wife, children, or a family. For many men, these three things along with their career are what define their identity. In my case, I am the oldest of seven children, and I am the fourth Zygmunt Mazanowski. For me, embracing celibacy would mean that there would be no Zygmunt Mazanowski the fifth to pass on

this very Polish name to. I also would not build a family or have the friendship of a wife. I actually could have chosen to hang out with these two girls that night. As I recall, these two young women entered the chapel with me, but their stay there was only for a few minutes. As they left, I decided to stay. There was complete freedom in this choice, and I was choosing to use my freedom to try to find out more about the vocation of living single for God's Kingdom that he might be calling me to in the future.

By the end of my senior year, I was 19 years old, and I decided to test this desire for celibacy out for real. The way I saw life at the time, I had five options. I could accept a scholarship to the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, or to Franciscan University in Ohio. I could apply to a diocesan seminary to pursue priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. I could join the Legionnaires of Christ religious order, or I could commit to the Brotherhood of the People of Praise for one year. After visits, conversations with my parents, and lots of personal prayer times, I felt that God was clearly calling me to spend a year with the men in the Brotherhood of the People of Praise.

Before I continue, I wanted to give a brief glimpse into the nature of the People of Praise Community. The People of Praise is an ecumenical (i.e. inter-denominational), charismatic, covenanted, Christian community. There are over 20 different "branches" of the People of Praise. Families and singles in these branches live a life in common together, while remaining committed to evangelism and building the Kingdom of God within the work world. There are a variety of ways we help make this a reality: men's and women's groups, spiritual headship relationships, separate annual men's and women's retreats, Lord's Day celebrations on Saturday evenings, monthly public prayer meetings, and local Sunday branch prayer meetings help the members of the People of Praise to use their freedom to build up the Body of Christ among Christians of all denominations. I personally have lived 24 of my 25 years within this Christian community, and I have been an adult member in the People of Praise for six years.

When I made the decision to spend a year studying within the Brotherhood, there was a Brotherhood house in South Bend, Indiana and another one in St. Paul, Minnesota. Shortly after I committed to a year of Christian studies with them, God called the Brotherhood to accept an invitation from Archbishop Francis George to come to Portland, Oregon. This meant I wasn't going to live three hours away in South Bend like I originally thought, but I would instead be moving over 2,000 miles away to the frequently rainy city of Portland.

The year I spent in Portland, Oregon, 1996-1997, was what I have always considered the best year of my life. Basically, I prayed consistently both personally and with the 11 other men, I studied scripture, theology, the history of celibacy in the Church, basic People of Praise teachings, and Christian character for a school year's time. We also joined in the life of the People of Praise across the Columbia River in the Vancouver, Washington Mission Branch. I also had an opportunity to teach some 1st and 2nd graders at All Saint's school 15 different times as we learned about the lives of some of important Saints found throughout the history of the Church. Those children from All Saint's Catholic grade school taught me as much or more about child-like faith, beauty,

purity, truth, and innocence, than I taught them. One of the men in the Brotherhood, Paul Langenfeld, was a full-time youth minister, and I helped him during that school year with the youth of St. John's Catholic Church. Another man, Glen Rymza, ran the Catholic Newman Center at Portland State, and I was able to spend some time with people close to my age through helping him minister there. With weekly small group faith sharing time, and with being part of and leading a number of Christian retreats, life in Portland was extremely full and eventful. In the early spring of 1997, I began to discern what to do next. Over time, through prayer and spiritual direction, I reached the conclusion that I should commit to two more years with the Brotherhood. My intention, after using Ignatius's method of discerning prayer was to go home in May to Indianapolis for the summer and come back for two more years with the Brotherhood starting in August of 1997.

Up to this point in time, I had lived what many would consider a picture perfect life. I had succeeded in high school sports (two years as a varsity football starter), and academics (4.0 g.p.a.), and I had two parents, four brothers, and two sisters who loved me. I was blessed with older and younger friends. I had many amazing spiritual experiences at Bishop Chatard and while in the Brotherhood. Finally, God had used me in a number of different ways to help a lot of people through being a spiritual and faithful friend. When I got off the plane on May 31, 1997, from Portland to Indianapolis, life as a 20 year-old with all its comforts, pleasures, and chances to take things for granted, would never look the same again. Simply put, when I arrived home to Indy, I had begun to show signs of the development of a chemical imbalance that causes the disease bipolar disorder.

The next four years of my life involved difficult and embarrassing hospitalizations, various attempts to find the right medicine for bipolar disorder, and seeking out wise doctors to help me. I also spent hours of time reflecting on how to unite the suffering I was experiencing with Jesus' redemptive suffering on the Cross. Over time, I began to believe as Paul did in 2 Corinthians 1:6, "If I am afflicted it is for your encouragement and salvation." Eventually, I too came to "know him by the power of his resurrection and through the sharing of his suffering" (Philippians 4:10). In some mysterious way I have begun to clearly see my experience of suffering as a way to "fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church" (Colossians 1:24). These insights did not happen over night, and often the only way I continued in trying to regain my health was through the love shown to me by my parents, family, friends, and by many brothers and sisters in the People of Praise Community.

Bipolar disorder is something that I never asked for, but the good that has come from this trial of my faith has changed me tremendously. I am now able to say that I truly am thankful for the blessings received, for the lessons learned, for the love I was shown by many, and for the understanding and deepening of my relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This past year, the fifth since leaving Portland, I have been completing my time and degree at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. I was born in Muncie on March

6, 1977 at Ball Memorial Hospital. I have many memories still etched in my mind from my first 10 years in Muncie. I remember living at Scheidler Apartments, and I remember our move to a small house two blocks from campus on Carson Street. I remember attending Riverside Preschool and St. Mary's Grade School from kindergarten to third grade. One memory many of my friends kid me about is when I tell them I used to catch turtles in the muck-filled duck pond on Ball State's campus, when I was younger. Little do they know that just last year I caught two small snapping turtles and one injured painted turtle in almost exactly the same spots I had caught similar turtles as a boy. Being in Muncie the last three and a half years has been a chance to relive and revisit the good memories I have of growing up here.

While at Ball State, I have been blessed to be able to go through the Honors Program, major in philosophy, minor in religious studies, and pursue a number of courses in education. I also have found friendship and fellowship through the Muncie Branch of the People of Praise, through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and through Saint Francis Roman Catholic Church and Newman Center. On May 4, 2002, I will graduate and return to Indianapolis, and I am currently pursuing a job in full-time Catholic campus ministry work.

Throughout the last five years, I personally have not given up hope on the possibility of God calling me to celibacy and to the priesthood. Many others have doubted this call in me, and some have actually given up hope that living out a celibate vocation would ever be possible for me, due to the suffering that I have experienced while dealing with a serious illness. Their doubts, fears, and loss of hope have not been easy for me to reconcile with within my heart, but I have chosen to press on to the goal of understanding the deepest desire of my heart, which is to live out God's will and plan for my life. During the last 12 months or so, God has restored me completely to good health. I feel as if my time of being sick was long ago, and that the person I was while being sick is not the person I have been recreated into today. I am thankful to be healthy, and I value the grace given to share with others the healing work that God has done and continues to do in me.

Recently, I was at a real "moment of truth" in prayer in regards to the state in life (married or single) I would live out. Part of this "moment of truth" was coming to the realization that the original way I thought I would live out a call to celibacy, which was in the Brotherhood, seemed to be closing. That morning as I woke up and decided to pray, I experienced having a conversation with both Mary and Jesus during my personal prayer time. I honestly cannot remember what Mary said, but I do remember that when I woke up that morning and began to pray, it was she who engaged my heart in conversation and brought me to her son Jesus. There was something about talking personally and prayerfully with the both of them that helped me to understand more fully the unique joy placed in my heart at age 17, while kneeling in a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. At one point during that inward conversation, Jesus said, "I knew in my heart that my Father had called me to suffer and die on the Cross. This was a reality for my life and I knew it was to come, but I did not know all the steps that it would take a long the way to reach this point of ultimate sacrifice." I remember responding, "I still have a very deep

and penetrating desire to live out my life as a single man for God, but I no longer am certain which religious community or what diocese God may call me to live out the day-to-day actions of this vocation." It was during this prayer time that I realized that despite my uncertainties, fundamentally in my heart I know that I have received an invitation to live single for God for life.

Conclusion:

God's desire in the end is for all of his children to accept the invitation to the vocation or state in life to which he is calling them to. The love needed for the married person to have a fruitful spousal relationship looks different than the love needed for celibate people to uniquely devote themselves to God and others. Both celibate men and celibate women are embracing and successfully living out this life of giving to others, and both are practical signs of God's presence and Kingdom on earth. The call to marriage is a sacred call that involves the self-sacrifice of two individuals for the good of one another. The fact that marriage is "till death do us part," allows both people to totally and freely commit to a self-giving love that will be reciprocated with a mutual self-giving love in return. The Roman Catholic Church's teachings in regards to marriage and family relationships leads to the gift of life flourishing and being cherished. The love present in marriage is a sign of Christ's self-sacrificing love for his bride the Church. Jesus' love for us, shown in his suffering and his willingness to die on the Cross has a profound affect on every Christian married and celibate person. When he conquered Satan, death, and sin, Jesus brought forth and opened up God's Kingdom for all who would believe and give theirs lives to him. It is only because of his sacrifice that we as married, single, and celibate people can show others self-giving, unconditional, consistent, and compassionate love.

The beauty of praying through one's vocation in life is that at some point in the process, God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, within the context of relationship with the person praying, offer an invitation to embrace a way of life that will directly positively affect the individual and the world. This invitation may cause fear, doubt, anxiety, joy, excitement, or peace. This Trinitarian invitation always comes with one's personal freedom of choice intact. As daughters and sons, we are free to accept an invitation from a Father who loves us immensely. If you have already accepted this invitation, I pray that God will give you an abundance of grace to live it out for a lifetime. If you have not accepted or have not realized your own specific invitation, I pray that in time you will receive the grace present in the unique and wonderful call to marriage or celibacy for life. As Saint Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until we find rest in Him."

May your heart find rest in the knowledge that you are living out the unique vocation that the Trinity has invited you to embrace forever.
May the peace of God reign in your heart,

Zygmunt Mazanowski IV

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